

AIRSPACE

Essential Rules of the Air

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PILOT-IN-COMMAND

[Section 2](#) of Part-SERA specifies that:

- > The PIC shall have the final authority as to the disposition of the aircraft while in command;
- > The PIC is always responsible for operation of the aircraft in accordance with SERA, regardless of whether they are manipulating the controls. The PIC may depart from the rules in SERA if absolutely necessary in the interests of safety; and
- > Before a flight the PIC shall be familiar with all available information appropriate to the intended operation. Preflight action for flights away from the vicinity of an aerodrome, and for all IFR flights, shall include careful study of available weather reports and forecasts, considering fuel requirements and an alternative course of action if the flight cannot be completed as planned.

Use of Psychoactive Substances

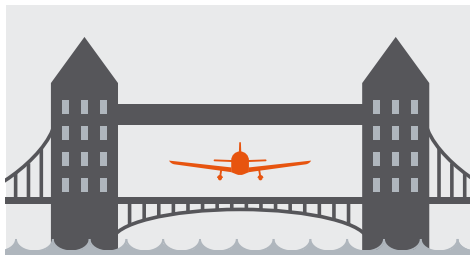
No person whose function is critical to the safety of aviation (safety-sensitive personnel) shall undertake that function while under the influence of any psychoactive substance, by reason of which human performance is impaired. No such person shall engage in any kind of problematic use of substances.

RULES FOR THE PROTECTION OF THIRD PARTIES

These rules are to protect people or property on the ground from aircraft operations. See [Section 3](#) of SERA for more details.

Negligent or reckless operation

- > Do not fly in a manner that would endanger either people or property.



AIRSPACE

Essential Rules of the Air

RULES FOR THE PROTECTION OF THIRD PARTIES

Low flying and congested areas

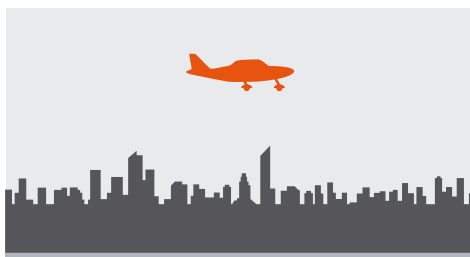
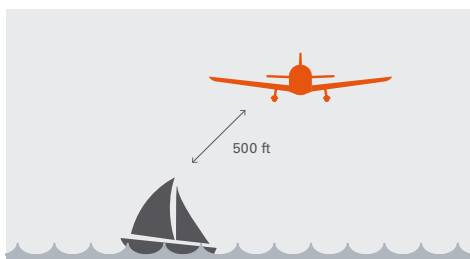
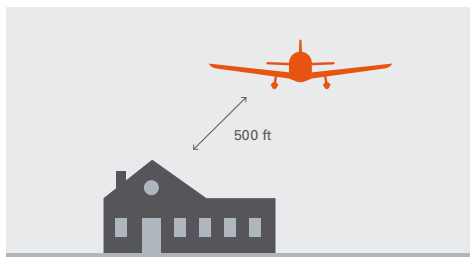
- > Unless necessary for taking off or landing, do not fly closer than 500 ft to any person, vessel, vehicle or structure.¹

There are some **UK-specific** exceptions to the above that permit certain manoeuvres (other than take-off or landing) to be conducted closer than permitted under the general 500 ft rule. These include:

- > Practising approaches at an aerodrome, but without intending to land;
- > Helicopters practising manoeuvres within the boundaries of an aerodrome, provided they do not come within 60 meters of a person, vessel, vehicle or structure that is outside the aerodrome boundary;
- > Picking up or dropping of towing apparatus at an aerodrome;
- > Gliders hill soaring; or
- > If permission has been issued by the CAA for specific circumstances or events – such as for an air display.

Full details can be found in the ORS4 section within the CAA website www.caa.co.uk/ors4.

- > Unless necessary for taking off or landing, do not overfly congested areas or open-air assemblies of people below a height that in the event of an emergency occurring, would permit a landing to be made without causing a hazard to people or property on the ground.



¹The standard rule under ICAO is for a VFR flight to not fly below **500 ft above ground level**, unless taking off or landing. When flying abroad be aware that this requirement may apply.

Essential Rules of the Air

- > Unless necessary for taking off or landing, when flying over congested areas or open air assemblies of people, you must not fly lower than 1,000 ft above the highest obstacle within 600 m of the aircraft.

There are some **UK-specific** general permissions that allow aircraft to fly below 1,000 ft above the highest obstacle within 600 m of the aircraft:

- > If following a specific route published in the AIP (for example the low level VFR routes near Manchester and Liverpool airspace) and complying with the specific conditions associated with that route;
- > Flying under a Special VFR clearance; or
- > A balloon that becomes becalmed while over a congested area and is compelled to land as a result.

You must still be able to land in the event of an emergency without causing hazard to people or property on the ground.

Full details can be found in the ORS4 section within the CAA website www.caa.co.uk/ors4.

Guidance



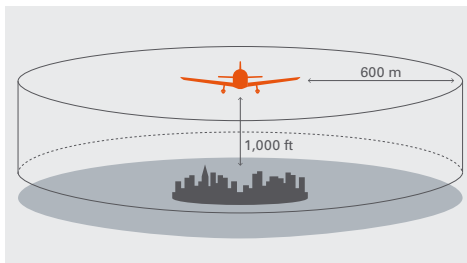
In the event of an engine failure, single engine aircraft should be able to glide clear of any congested areas. You should not rely on being able to land in parks or other open spaces within congested areas, since there may be people on them.

Notes:

Aircraft on a national permit to fly may be additionally restricted from flying over congested areas by the conditions of their permit.

'Congested area' in relation to a city, town or settlement, is any area which is substantially used for residential, industrial, commercial or recreational purposes.

'Notified' means set out with the authority of the CAA in a document published by or under an arrangement entered into with the CAA and entitled 'United Kingdom Notam' or 'United Kingdom Aeronautical Information Publication'.



The UK Rules of the Air Regulations 2015 also specify that you must not:

- > Take-off or land within a congested area, unless either at an aerodrome and in accordance with procedures in the AIP, or at a site other than an aerodrome with the specific permission of the CAA;
- > Take-off or land within 1,000 m of an open air assembly of more than 1,000 people, unless at an aerodrome and in accordance with procedures notified by the CAA, or at a site other than an aerodrome in accordance with procedures notified by the CAA and with the written permission of the organiser of the assembly;
- > Carry out aerobatic flights over congested areas; or
- > Carry out test or experimental flying over congested areas in an aircraft that does not have a valid certificate of airworthiness.

There are specific procedures for balloons taking off and landing in congested areas. Full details can be found in the ORS4 section within the CAA website www.caa.co.uk/ors4.